



PARTNERSHIP FOR
21ST CENTURY SKILLS

**Before the
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554**

In the Matter of)
)
Modernizing the E-rate) **WC Docket No. 13-184**
Program for Schools and Libraries)

**COMMENTS OF THE
PARTNERSHIP FOR 21ST CENTURY SKILLS (P21)**

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Filed via ECFS at:
<http://fjallfoss.fcc.gov/ecfs2/>

¹ P21 is a national organization that advocates for 21st century readiness for every student. As the United States continues to compete in a global economy that demands innovation, P21 and its members provide tools and resources to help the U.S. education system keep up by fusing the 3Rs and 4Cs (critical thinking and problem solving, communication, collaboration and creativity and innovation). While leading districts and schools are already doing this, P21 advocates for local, state and federal policies that support this approach for every school.

P21 Members: Amplify, Apple Inc., Cable in the Classroom, Cengage Learning, The College Board, Common Sense Media, Crayola, Destination Imagination, EdLeader21, EF Education, Education Networks of America, Ford Motor Company Fund, Goddard Systems Inc., Intel Corporation, JP – Inspiring Knowledge, LEGO Education, National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, National Education Association, Pearson Foundation, Project Management Institute Educational Foundation, PBS, U.S. Fund for UNICEF, VIF International Education, and The Walt Disney Company.

P21 Leadership States: Arizona, California, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Vermont, Wisconsin and West Virginia.

To help practitioners integrate skills into the teaching of core academic subjects, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21) developed a unified, collective vision for learning known as the Framework for 21st Century Learning. This Framework describes the skills, knowledge and expertise all students must master to succeed in work and life; it is a blend of content knowledge, specific skills, expertise and literacies. An important part of this Framework and the basis for these comments is Information, Media and Technology Skills. Today, we live in a technology and media-driven environment, marked by access to an abundance of information, rapid changes in technology tools and the ability to collaborate and make individual contributions on an unprecedented scale. Effective citizens and workers must all be able to exhibit a range of functional skills such as information literacy, media literacy, and ICT (information, communications and technology) literacy. P21 supports the ConnectED initiative and the FCC's goal to increase access to modernize higher-capacity broadband because it will create and expand more digital learning opportunities for students to improve educational experiences in the Information, Media and Technology Skills laid out in the P21 Framework. All students must be given access to 21st Century Skills and that goal simply cannot be accomplished without fully implementing this plan.

In addressing the Commission's comments toward the educational impact of higher-capacity broadband in the classroom, we support the ConnectED initiative and SETDA targets of 100 Mbps service with a target of 1 Gbps to most schools and libraries within 5 years and further support comparable wireless network connectivity to support authentic learning environments for which wireless is a part.

We feel this should be a focus in measuring the Commission's first goal of increased broadband capacity.

P21 believes access to technology transfers directly into college and career readiness and workforce readiness and is continually working as an organization to demonstrate and document this educational impact. As part of a new initiative to capture and share the 21st century learning practices that are improving schools and student learning in classrooms and communities across the United States, P21 has launched Patterns of Innovation: The 21st Century Learning Exemplar Program, which showcases schools, educators, and students from around the country that have embraced the P21 Framework to increase educational options and outcomes for all children.

Developed with the Pearson Foundation and other P21 members, Patterns of Innovation is designed to share the experiences of schools that have successfully transformed their students' learning by incorporating elements of the P21 Framework into teacher practice, curriculum, assessment, and professional development.

These exemplars are part of a rigorous examination of schools, supported by the Pearson Foundation, to show what 21st Century Skills practice looks like in action and to identify, document and celebrate exemplary 21st century learning across the country. Many of these schools show the promise that higher-capacity broadband and corresponding digital learning can deliver.

The Van Meter Community School District is one of these examples. Located in a small, rural community, the Van Meter Community School District in Van Meter,

Iowa has implemented a 1:1 computing initiative, standards-based grading and the beginning of a competency-based instruction through a model chemistry class.

Librarian Shannon Miller works closely with K-5 students and teachers to support and implement Van Meter's digital literacy and citizenship curriculum in social studies, language arts and other classrooms, helping students build digital literacy along with a love for reading and books.

Van Meter educators are also bolstering students' adaptability and communication skills through projects that connect students to learners around the country and internationally. In one class, Spanish students increase their fluency during conversations with native speakers across the world. In another, Van Meter students connected with a district in New Orleans to compare the impact of extreme weather on their local communities. Students even engaged directly with a software developer in New Zealand on a program he created and that the students were using and having problems with in order to correct those difficulties. All experiences that couldn't be made possible without the presence of adequate higher-capacity broadband capability.

The Commission asked if there are ways in which to measure how success in the classroom is affected by access to E-rate funding or services supported by E-rate. The Commission explained that critics claimed that educational performance is affected by numerous factors and found no reliable conclusions to be drawn on whether there is a statistically significant effect on student test scores. While we believe educational outcomes are outside the Commission's core competence and it shouldn't adopt educational-outcome measurements as a part of this process, we do believe there is area to measure this better and we look forward to working

collectively with the U.S. Department of Education throughout the entire ConnectED initiative to do this. We would argue that high-stakes summative test scores don't fully capture the full range of student competencies that multiple formative assessment measures could capture.

In addition to these multiple measures, there are several anecdotal examples of student educational performance in a higher-capacity broadband environment. Like the experiences students receive at Van Meter Community Schools in Iowa, schools in North Carolina, such as Mooresville, which was highlighted in the ConnectED initiative announcement by the White House, or Onslow County which uses its broadband capability and digital learning for global awareness education opportunities. P21 stands ready to further document and champion these efforts.

The ConnectED initiatives and the expansion and modernization of the E-rate program ultimately will help transform the technological infrastructure in the nation's classrooms and libraries, allowing schools and communities to provide more students with a 21st century education. Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on behalf of the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21).

Sincerely,
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